Q & A: From 2025

Mystery Easter Eggs in our Compost Pile

Q. Lately we've been finding "Easter egg" mushrooms in our compost pile. However, when we cut one open, we find nothing inside. We conclude these are not mushrooms! If so, what? Coincidentally, on the same day we discovered nearby a new snake, small. Have you seen this before? LIz

I turned your question over to our resident herpetologist (Tania) and she solved the mystery. The "Easter egg" mushrooms are rat snake eggs, and the snake is a baby rat snake. The coloration of juvenile rat snakes is totally different from when they grow into an adult black rat snake!

We have several in our yard and garden, and huge ones 6' or longer and 3" in diameter have visited us in the past. Rat snakes are beneficial, keeping our small rodent population in check. We have found couples overwintering in our covered compost pile where it's warmer. Shrews also live in our compost pile, providing tasty treats for the snakes.

Of course, there is a downside: the snakes also eat our earthworms. Thank you for making the connection for us!

You can find more at:
https://dougelliottstory.wordpress.com/2015/08/31/the-mystery-reptile-eggs/ and
https://www.alamy.com/juvenile-eastern-rat-snake-pantherophis-alleghaniensis-image348467742.html

Worms NOT in our Compost Pile

Q. Followup comment on earthworms (and their lack) in our compost piles. Jeff

Reflecting on our discussion yesterday on vermiculture and earthworms, I omitted an important detail on the decline of worms in our compost pile -- garter snakes (aka garden snakes). These eat worms (and slugs, and small rodents). They have become common in our garden and like

living in our compost pile. Whenever we find one there, Tania gets a bucket, picks it up by its tail, and brings it down to the lower yard -- our version of catch and release. We used to have a slug problem, now much less so. Rat snakes also like our compost pile, but we leave these alone, as they focus on rodents -- mice and voles.

Overwintering our Meyer Lemon in Our Greenhouse

Q. I was thinking of getting an electric oil-filled radiator one to keep near the Meyer lemon tree in my father's greenhouse to keep it from freezing. Having a source of warmth near it should help. Otherwise we have an electric coil-type the just blows a steady stream of hot air into the greenhouse from the west end. The lemon tree is towards the east end. What do you recommend? Liz

The hot air blower should work well enough. To test this, place a max-min thermometer in the tree and take readings on a cold night. If the hot air blower is thermostatically controlled, you may be relieved to find that it does the job. An additional heater may well be overkill. Radiator heaters work by convection, not radiation, and without a fan to blow the heat toward the tree. Not sure it's worth the capital and operating expense if the blower is working. Of course, if power goes out, neither will work. Not knowing how to care for a Meyer lemon, I found a site reporting real experience with a potted Meyer lemon and a Facebook post with other comments:
https://www.foodgardenlife.com/learn/2019/5/1/how-cold-can-lemon-trees-get
https://www.facebook.com/groups/271521942901159/posts/8666602723392997/

Battery Powered Wheelbarrows

Q. Now that I'm getting up there in years, I've been collecting battery powered garden tools – chain saws, weed wackers, lawn mowers. What I could really use is a battery powered wheelbarrow. Have you heard of anything like this? Jack

Funny you should ask. My fellow gardener Karl just sent me a link to an article reviewing these:
https://www.popularmechanics.com/home/g62805877/best-electric-wheelbarrows/

Harvesting Lemon Grass

Q. My husband grew out some lemon grass from seeds for me to replace the mangy potted plant that never did well. Here it is late summer and I have an amazing bushy plant with fronds that are over two feet long. How do I save these for later use? Jasmine

You probably know that lemon grass likes a hot environment. You can achieve this by planting your seedlings in a large black plastic pot and put it out in the sun. Tania successfully grew out

lemon grass this year, and put some in a pot on our deck (below left, upper right corner) and another group with her ginger and turmeric, which she covered with plastic (below right at harvest).

On harvesting, you can use both the thick stalks and the slender grass-like fronds. On the thick stalks, cut into 4-6" lenghts and peel the outer leaves. At this point you can proceed in one of two ways. First, you can chop finely or grate and place the pieces in a kitchen muslin bag, sinking it in with whatever you're cooking, and removing it on serving. Second, you can make a bundle of 6-8 of the stalks, tie it with a long string, and sink that with whatever you're cooking. Tania followed the advice in the video below and made two kinds of braids, which she stored and gave as gifts (two images below, left). She also froze some stalks (image below, far right).

For more, see https://www.theprairiehomestead.com/2014/11/lemongrass-grow-use.html and this informative video featuring a Hmong mother and her daughter: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lDubTMLo_GE

Reminder on Pawpaw Toxins

Q. Thank you so much for the offer! We didn't care much for the raw pawpaw, but I was just reading about using them in baking for things like quick breads and muffins. I would really like to try that! Thank you! Kathryn

I will bring some over for you to use in baking, but first, a caveat. Pawpaws contain neurotoxins which get released, accentuated or concentrated by cooking or dehydrating. Last fall our tenant's girlfriend made a baked custard with pawpaws and she suffered nausea

intestinal distress. Just this morning a friend of ours stopped by to pick up some pawpaws. His companion, who works at Tait Farms, made a baked dessert with pawpaws and suffered a similar reaction.

I discussed this in more detail in our 2024 Q & A article (http://www.neo-terra.org/uploads/2/5/6/4/25644359/garden_qs_2024.pdf). Use ctrl f with the phrase "Another vendor reminded us" to bring you directly to page 10 of our article. We also discussed this in a 2022 Q & A article (http://www.neo-terra.org/uploads/2/5/6/4/25644359/garden_qs_2022.pdf). Using ctrl f with the word "pawpaw" brings you to page 18 directly.

If after reading these you want to try cooking with pawpaws, let me know and I will bring some over. Kentucky State University has a pawpaw research center which sports a recipes page: https://www.kysu.edu/academics/college-ahnr/school-of-anr/pawpaw/recipes-and-uses.php

Reply: Thanks, I think we'll pass.

Exchange on Pruning Overgrown Apple Tree

Q. Hi Gene, could you take a look at this tree. The branches are sweeping the ground. This did not happen last year despite a bumper crop. I am afraid we may loose limbs due to storm damage. Do you think I should prune branches? Fahriye

Here is my reply, with further questions from Fahriye:

1. Looking at your tree it strikes me it hasn't been pruned in years. It has overcrowded branches, is too tall, and probably a nightmare to pick fruit. Do you rely on picking up dropped fruit?

This was a dwarf tree when we bought this house, with crabapples grafted close to the ground. I didn't even realize that it was an apple tree, no fruit. I had difficulty reaching under it to weed so I asked the arborists who had come to prune our trees at the backyard to also prune this so I could reach under and also to thin it out.

Hmmm. A grafted crabapple – onto some dwarfing rootstock? This puzzles me. If it was a dwarf tree, the root stock would have been a dwarfing rootstock. If the arborist pruned the grafted part, then what took over was the root stock, and that should have been a dwarf also. I can't figure this out. What you seem to have is a standard apple that emerged from root stock which wasn't really a dwarf. Your arborist pruned off the crabapple grafts, leaving the apple root to take over. Hard to believe this all happened in two years.

This was the year before last. As a result, we had a wonderful crop last year, I sent you the picture of the apples that I still have some in the fridge. When we left two months ago, the tree

looked ok. However, I am told it rained incessantly, every day and everything is overgrown. I had asked my lawn mower kid to weed, so weeds have not taken over the yard but everything else is super lush and it is like a tropical garden. We had incessant rain, too, this spring and summer, with similar results – wild mint 6' tall, an Asian lily 12' tall, weeds all over the place. Ugh!

2. Pruning of pomes (apples and pears) and stone fruit (peaches, apricots, nectarines) should be done twice a year. In the late winter you do shape pruning. You remove dead branches, crossing branches, vertical suckers thinning of whole branches to open up the tree. You want to bring the tree closer to the center and closer to the ground. I do this when new growth is evident so you can distinguish dead from live branches.
I gather that I should have pruned it this past winter. So, what month should I plan to have it done? I think I had it pruned in late fall last time. Late winter – March when the tree looks like it is going to bud out. That way you can distinguish dead limbs from live growth. For more, I found this OSU page for you: https://extension.oregonstate.edu/news/apple-trees-benefit-proper-pruning Check out this video also for a more visual explanation: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bkC_itYIrSQ&ab_channel=SeedsofChange

In the mid-summer (July) you do **tip pruning**. The article refers to heading-back cuts, or shortening of the ends of branches. This encourages new shoot growth interior to the tree. In the absence of pruning, the tree keeps adding length to its branches and you end up with the tree you now have. You should also cut to the bottom any vertical shoots. These will not produce much fruit. Prune where it grows from the main branch.

I looked the tree yesterday several times and could not figure out how I should trim the tips that are full of apples. I guess I could arbitrarily cut a length of the branches—one foot? Two feet? Fahriye, skip this step for this year. Read the above OSU article and watch the video. I am not clear, for instance, whether your tree was grown to a central leader or open vase. Can you tell?

3. When tip-pruning you will notice you have choices. New shoots go in different directions. Prune to a new shoot that takes the new growth in the right direction -- not downward, not straight up, but toward an open area and slightly upward is ideal. At this point it is impossible to distinguish new vs old shoots. Fahriye, skip for this year.

4. For pruning, you will require a good pruning saw and sharp hand pruners. A tree of your size requires ladder work. A stepladder could work, but judging from the size of your tree I would say you, or the person you hire to do this, will require an orchard ladder. What do a good pruning saw and sharp hand pruners look like? In the video the woman uses a Felco pruner, which both Tania and I use. This is a high quality pruner which the company backs up with a full array of replacement parts. If you are right-handed I recommend the Felco #2, available here: https://kilianhardware.com/felco-2-pruner/ This store also carries a medium quality pruning saw that could work for you: https://kilianhardware.com/folding-pruning-saw/?searchid=256269&search_query=japanese+pruning+saw

5. To improve fruit quality and reduce disease, it is important to thin your fruit. Trees self-thin, but not very well. Apples produce clusters of blossoms, and therefore tight clusters of apples touching each other. These should be thinned to one apple per cluster to reduce weight and disease pressure. Favor apples closer to the interior of a branch rather than those at the end,

where the weight of the apple will bend the branch down. I could do this, have Feyza and my mower kid help, as far as we can reach using a step ladder. Yes, there are lots of clusters of 3. This was not the case last year. Late to do this, but would be good practice.

6. Not that I am recommending this, but I came across a fellow gardener who shaped and pruned his apple as if it were a peach. Rather than a central leader with branches, he shaped it with a scaffold of open branches. All were pruned at about 8 feet or so and had a flat top. It made for easy picking of fruit. The video above shows this version.

7. This leaves the question: what to do now? You can prune whole branches now. You will lose fruit, but my guess is you have a lot of fruit on your tree. The tree will heal itself from cuts you make. You do not want to wait until fall, as healing is less likely and may open the tree to infection. Is this work you will be doing yourself?

I tried to decide which branches to prune but didn't know how to pick. What should I do?

1. Just thin the fruit? Yes
2. Cut the tips of branches a certain length? No. Figure proper pruning next winter after you review OSU article and video.
3. Prune whole branches – but how? I am not clear whether you have a tree pruned to a central leader or open vase. Let me know. Regardless, prune whole branches that are too low and close to touching the ground. Prune back to the trunk or a nearby larger branch. Prune almost flush with the parent branch. You will notice a collar, a kind of slightly bulging growth at the junction. Prune to leave this collar on the parent branch but not into the collar. This will speed healing.
4. Call an arborist – however they may be busy and not come around till it is too late. Arrange for next winter.

Let me know whether this helps, and raise any new questions. We can talk on the phone if that would help. Gene

Hollyhocks

Q. I purchased Hollyhocks from a nursery in the spring. They developed a rust very early on, as soon as they started to grow tall, which happened quickly, and sprouted leaves. Do you ever spray the hollyhocks you have? I assume yours are perennials. Many websites recommend copper spray and/or grow as annuals from seed in the Fall. Sylvia

Ours are Hollyhock Zebrina, a perennial, or short-lived perennial. Grows 3-4' tall. It self-seeds prolifically, so you should always have it. Probably wise to thin and space 18" apart or so. Never had to spray. On ordinary hollyhocks, Tania recalls ours were devastated by bugs that turned the plant into tatters. We abandoned these for our garden.

Reply: Thanks. These Hollyhocks seems to be tricky to grow. Two plants are inside. One in water and one in soil in a cool shady place in my home seem to be surviving. The couple outside maybe are making it but being attacked by some big chomping critter.

(Sigh) chomping. Critters. Ours are inside the fenced area. Never tried to grow these outside. I checked Rutgers Deer Resistant Plant Guide for hollyhock. They gave it a C rating --

occasionally severely damaged by deer. https://njaes.rutgers.edu/deer-resistant-plants/?search=hollyhock&submit=Search

What's Wrong With My Roses?

Q. I was wondering if you had any idea as to what is wrong with my roses??? It looks to me like a fungal infection on the leaves, but not clear about the blossoms. Maybe spittle bugs on the rose buds? Your thoughts? Here are three pictures. Kerry

The third picture is a dead giveaway: witches broom of roses. Here are two links:
1. https://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/gardens-gardening/your-garden/help-for-the-home-gardener/advice-tips-resources/insects-pests-and-problems/diseases/viruses/rose-rosette

2. video:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1D4KKkbMJX8&ab_channel=GreenBizNursery%26LandscapingInc

Sawfly Larva on My Red Currants

Q. I found larva feeding on my red currant bushes. Would covering with shade cloth protect the berries? Jack

Shade not necessary to protect fruit in the northeast. If you are going to make jelly, pick as soon as berries turn red. For fresh eating, or making cobblers or other desserts, keep on the bush for about three weeks after turning red, as they will sweeten up.

You can pick whole strigs (the name for the fruit cluster), taking care not to damage the twig or spur from which the strig hangs. Strip the berries from the strig. If you are going to freeze our practice with red currants is to lay them out in a single layer on a cookie sheet and freeze overnight, after which you place quickly in a container for long term storage. Berries tend to be wet when picked, and freezing them in containers leads to large clumps of berries stuck

together. Freezing on a cookie tray first reduces the stickiness of the berries and makes it easier to pour or remove them from the container later.

We also freeze raspberries on cookie trays in one layer before storing.

Roots are shallow, so mulch with chipped wood or other material. Water during hot and dry periods. We add compost and peat in the fall, with minerals as determined by a soil test for fruit. We prune in early spring when new growth is visible and it is easier to identify older or dead wood.

Lee Reich has a wonderful chapter on red and white currants in Uncommon Fruits for Every Garden. He also has separate chapters on black currants and gooseberries, among other uncommon but delicious fruits. You can also check online sources, such as https://extension.umn.edu/fruit/growing-currants-and-gooseberries-home-garden

Antinutrients and Oxalates in Kale and Spinach

Q. Could you guys sent me straight on this subject? I just read that kale and spinach are loaded with anti-nutrients and are high in oxalates, along with almonds. Thanks in advance, Karl

1. From Bargyla Rateaver, Organic Method Primer UPDATE:

Kale. Young leaves used in salad, older leaves cooked. High in calcium, vitamin A and C. Should not be eaten raw by those taking thyroid extracts. Suggests cooking in milk, but why is not clear, though I have read elsewhere that milk binds oxalates. According to the second link in 2 below, kale is low in oxalates.

Spinach. Leaves contain oxalates, mostly in the spring. Oxalates decline as plant grows. Vitamin C highest in spring, but declines by harvestable stage in late April. Same with carotene (source of vitamin A) and amino acids, both decreasing as plant ages. Bolts easily under long day and heat. While we plant some in the spring, we plant our favorite variety, Giant Winter, in mid August for transplanting to our winter greenhouse. Doesn't bolt in the fall, but overwinters and then goes to seed the next spring.

2. Web MD article on oxalates: https://www.webmd.com/diet/foods-high-in-oxalates Cooking reduces oxalates. Recommendation: limit ingestion of high oxalate foods if you are prone to kidney stones. Otherwise, the benefits outweigh the costs. Kale is ranked as a low-oxalate food. See also https://news.medill.northwestern.edu/chicago/kale-sheds-bum-rap-on-kidney-stones/

Clover as Cover Crop

Q. Do you have a suggestion for a "set it and forget it" cover crop? I'm looking for one that wouldn't need to be mowed, isn't going to grow tall, and will be in for the entire season and likely longer. I was thinking white clover? Can you confirm/refute this idea or suggest some other options? Woody

Dutch white clover -- the kind you see in the grass. Perennial. Low growing. Spreads slowly.

Fixes nitrogen. Puts up white blossoms that bees love (and rabbits, too, by the way). I've used this in the past beneath our former Reliance peach trees. Handles shade well. Checking out Peaceful Valley's page, I found a combo that might be even better. Below is the page for clovers. Check out the second selection, a combo low growing clover mix of two clovers -- Dutch white and Palestine strawberry clover.
https://www.groworganic.com/collections/clover-seed

Garden Water Filters

Q. Do you have any advice for a proper garden water filter? Mark

You will require a casing that holds the filter, and the filter itself. Scroll down this page to the white filter in the section titled “Garden Hose Filter”: https://www.purewaterproducts.com/garden-hose-filters The filter costs $49. Filter cartridges are bought separately. Scroll down the page. I think Lynn would want the one on top of the list -- MatriKX CTO Plus for $21, good for 30,000 gallons.

Remember to take this inside when cold weather arrives. You do not want this to freeze. Drain water, but keep cartridge inside filter. You do not want cartridge to dry out during winter. You will have to adapt a piece of hose with two female couplings to connect the filter to your outside faucet. While plastic couplings could work, if Lynn is going to keep it hose under pressure when not in use, I recommend getting high quality metal couplings instead. If couplings still leak, use teflon tape on the male sides.

Yellowing of My Grape Leaves

Q. I have a yellowing of my grape plant leaves on a couple plants that came up in my adjacent garden and I sprayed with a little copper. But the rain washed it off. How often should I spray? And for the actual grapes, spray right onto the grapes? The instructions are not so clear. Sylvia

On yellowing of grape leaves, the copper you sprayed gets absorbed by the leaves before it gets washed off, particularly if you sprayed under the leaves, where the stomata are. Any copper that washes off will be absorbed by the roots and used by the plant if that is the deficiency.

Another sign of yellowing points to iron deficiency. I have some iron sulfate pellets I can give you. Sprinkle on the soil around the plants, work into the soil gently, and water in.

Unless you or your neighbors have cultivated grapes, a grape plant that just "came up" could be a wild grape, which are generally not productive but invasive. Do your plants have actual grapes on them? If so, spray the grapes to prevent black rot. Add a bit of liquid dish soap to

the spray bottle so that the copper solution sticks to the grape. You can tell you have enough soap if the spray covers the entire grape and leaves a uniform sheen. That is, it does not bead. I spray whenever I see evidence of black rot. The evidence is brown spots forming on grapes which eventually consumes the entire grape. After a while. the grape turns black, falls off, lies on the soil, and sporolates next year to spread the disease. Scout for grapes that show these signs and throw into the trash.

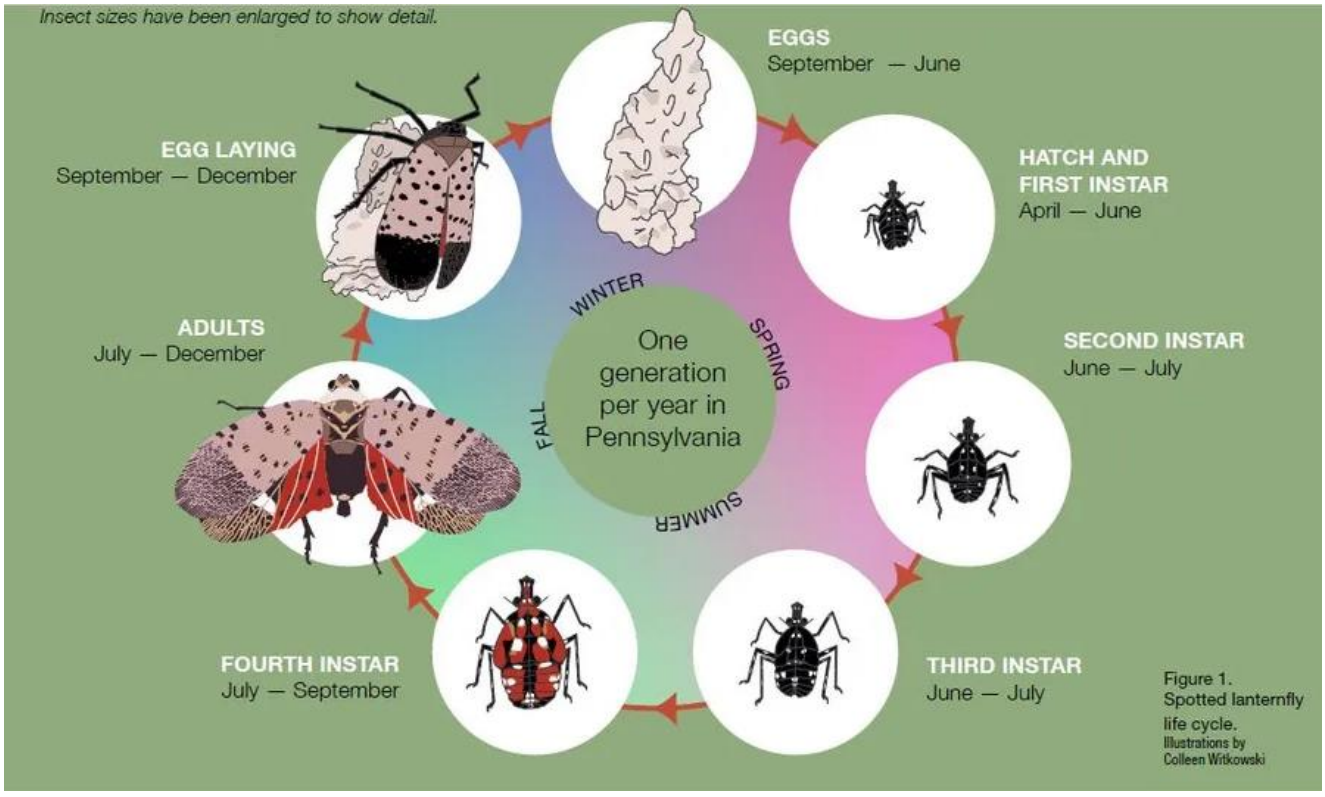
Spotted Lantern Fly

Q. We're seeing Spotted Lantern Flies in our garden for the second year in a row. How do we get rid of them? Tony

Tania found this article that has several ways for dealing with the SLF: https://drecampbell.com/natural-ways-get-rid-spotted-lanternflies-lycorma-delicatula/

Certain plants repel the SLF: https://shuncy.com/article/what-plants-repel-spotted-lanternfly

You may also find the PSU Extension guide helpful (you may have to copy and paste into your browser): https://extension.psu.edu/spotted-lanternfly-management-guide Below is PSU's graphic displaying the stages and seasons of the SLF.



Using Azomite in Your Garden

Q. I have my bag of Azomite now. You mentioned that you add it to your compost. How much? And is that to the finished compost or while it's composting?Thanks for your advice, Deb

Here are the Azomite recommendations: https://azomite.com/azomite-mineral-fertilizer-products/application-guidelines/. If you s scroll down to Home Use you will find under the first recommendation the following: "**Vegetable & Flower Gardens**: Apply 1/2 lb per 100 square feet or 1/2 lb per 200 ft of linear row in a 6″ wide band." 1/2 lb is approximately 1 cup.

Since it is a fine powder, it would be hard to spread it evenly. What you could do is mix it with, say, a bucket of garden soil from your growing bed and sprinkle it evenly back onto your bed and rake it into the soil lightly. Then plant your seedlings or other plants. For plants already in the bed, sprinkle the mix lightly around the plants and scratch in with a rake or small hand fork.

I would not recommend adding it to your compost pile. If you're pile is any large size, it would be hard to mix it in evenly or to calculate how much to use.

In our use, we add Azomite to our potting mix for starting our seeds in flats. We add a half cup each of kelp meal and Azomite to a batch of 15 gallons of potting mix (3 five-gallon buckets) which we mix in our wheelbarrow. Our potting mix is 2 buckets of sifted compost, 1/2 bucket of sifted peat moss, and 1/2 bucket of sifted sifted garden loam. When we transplant seedlings into the beds, the Azomite gets transferred to the garden bed. We toss any left over flat mix into our new compost pile, where it gets mixed thoroughly as we turn the compost.

Have I answered your question? If not, fire away with another one.

Deb: Thanks so much for the details about your seed starting mix. I will add my Azomite to that. I'm not exactly sure what the garden loam is? Is your garden loam made from grass?

When we skim our cut cover crops in the spring, we cut these into squares and stack these up in our storage area and water lightly over the summer. It breaks down into nutrient-rich soft soil. You can use soil from your garden beds instead.

Fermenting Vegetables

Q. I got your recipes for fermenting cucumbers. Why do you use oak leaves when fermenting vegetables such as cucumbers, beets and peppers? Lori

Leaves of grape, raspberry and oak can be used when pickling vegetables as these have tannin, and tannin compounds keep the pickled vegetables from going soft. Investigating oak trees for tannin content, I determined that oak trees were traditionally used in the leather tanning business -- mainly the bark and chipped wood. The leaves are lower in tannins but increase in tannin content by the fall. I switched from grape to oak leaves two years ago and realized a definite improvement in the quality of pickles, and lower failure rates. I collect leaves from our white oak in the fall and save these in a big plastic bag for use in the following year. Since

cucumbers mature in the mid summer, I suppose you could use fresh fallen leaves from your live oak. You might scour your yard now for oak leaves from last fall and save a bunch. You will require 2-4 per jar depending on the size, so not a lot. Pick extra, and, if you like pickled cukes, make it a point to collect oak leaves this fall. By the way, our intern from three years ago did a video of me preparing pickled beets, which we posted on our website. In that video, I was still using grape leaves. Here is the link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7MGXgo-vdHA (I have to copy and paste youtube links into my browser).

Twisted, Deformed Carrots and Beets

My root vegs seem to all be strangely warped and twisted … even our Master Gardener group didn't seem to know why, so not doing that again … sticking to blueberries, raspberries and my fruit trees. Nancy

The warped roots could be nematodes. One telltale sign in carrots is forked roots -- two or more roots coming off the head. If you have any disfigured ones left, send a picture. One cure is to plant either barley or mustard in the area you intend to plant the carrots the following season. Barley immobilizes the carrot root nematode amidst its roots. Mustard acts as a bio-fumigant against soil borne pathogens and insects.

Another culprit is synthetic insecticides, e.g, 2,4 D, usually due to drift from area farmers who use it on their crops.

Below are links to two articles. The first is a long and wordy article on deformed beets. Persevere and get down deeper into the article where they make specific suggestions for you to consider. I am puzzled that they left out boron! Beets and spinach like boron. A soil test in which you ask to have trace minerals measured should reveal a deficiency. A soil test will also disclose pH (whether your soil is too acidic or too basic) and whether you are deficient in phosphorus. Here is the article: https://gardenerspath.com/plants/vegetables/deformed-small-beets/

The second article is more detailed but only has one reference to deformed beets, linking it to an insect carrying a virus: https://plantvillage.psu.edu/topics/beet/infos Scroll down to **Beet Curly Top Disease**. Below the images are descriptions on Symptoms, Cause, Comments and Management. Under Symptoms you will read "The young roots become dwarfed and rootlets are twisted and distorted. The death of rootlets leads to growth of new rootlets which gives the hairy root appearance."

To keep off insects, especially the beet leaf miner fly, we use cages made of tutu net (see image above). A piece of row cover would also work, but get one that lets the most light

through. You can purchase tutu net at https://tutu.com/. Look under Supplies>Fabrics>Tutu Net.

We use similar cages on our brassicas to keep off the cabbage moth, and on cucumbers to keep off the cucumber beetle. I get 3-4 years out of a cage, as these degrade in UV light. Earlier we used tulle, but that ended up being too lightweight. It tore easily and degraded more quickly.

Initially we used vertical wooden stakes and old socks on top of the stakes (as the image of the beets shows), but these rotted quickly and poked holes through the tutu net. We now use emt (electrical metal tubing) which distributes the stresses and is more gentle on the fabric.